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Sample Proficiency Standard

D: Composition

CONTENT STANDARD

Students in Wisconsin will compose and arrange music.

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PERFORMANCE STANDARD

D1: By the end of grade 12, students in instrumental classes who have completed more than one year of study will compose music, demonstrating imagination and technical skill in applying the principles of composition.

SAMPLE TASK

For the past three weeks we have been rehearsing a multi-movement work and discussing the various compositional devices the composer used to achieve certain effects. In preparation for this project, we have also discussed the concept of a melodic phrase and the difference between those that end on the tonic and those that don't. In this two-week project, you will compose an original melody using some of the devices analyzed in the work we have been rehearsing. It should be approximately 32 bars long, and you are to notate, perform, and record it. We have discussed the criteria for such a composition and have described the indicators of the various levels of proficiency.

The work will be assessed on the following criteria

- melodic contour, phrasing
- unity and variety
- rhythmic accuracy
- cohesive tonality
- expressive qualities

DESCRIPTION OF PROFICIENCY CATEGORIES

Advanced

Clearly shaped melodic line, implying half and whole cadences; unity and variety achieved through repeated melodic and rhythmic units and changes in tempo, style, tonality, etc.; pickups and strong notes occur on appropriate beats; tonal center clearly indicated by scalar phrases, chordal outlines, and beginning and ending notes; appropriate use of dynamic change and articulation.

Proficient

Melody well shaped in general but cadences occasionally unclear or unbalanced; achieves a fair degree of unity and variety; strong notes and pickups usually on appropriate beats; tonal center fairly clear through melodic outline and beginning and ending notes; effective dynamics and articulation employed occasionally.

Partially Proficient

Melody shows some shape and line, perhaps with awkward leaps; unifying elements generally lacking; strong notes and pickups often occur randomly; tonal center somewhat vague; dynamics and articulation, when employed, are often inappropriate or ineffective.

Minimal

Melody line has no or very little pattern; unifying elements totally lacking; pickups and strong notes occur randomly; no tonal center established; dynamics and articulation missing.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

EXPLANATIONS OF RATINGS OF STUDENT WORK

Proficient

Melodic phrasing is fairly clear, with cadences at four-measure intervals except for measure 23, which has too few beats, and measures 30 through 32. The composition has a two-piece structure with each section seemingly unrelated. A final return to measures five through eight would give a more unified feeling. The composition has a firm rhythmic structure. While the key signature indicates a center of B flat, the beginning and ending notes and the strongest melodic tendencies emphasize D. A key of d minor or D major would be a more convincing choice. Articulations are indicated in several places and are well-chosen.

Partially Proficient

In this composition the composer uses unifying melodic and rhythmic elements almost to a fault. The melody has a definite shape but follows a tonic chordal pattern in a static, repeated manner that avoids the expected half or whole cadence. The often-repeated eighth note chordal pattern followed by a bar of relative repose gives the sense of discrete, loosely related two-measure melodic segments instead of a unified melodic line. The instances of awkward leaps followed by skips in the same direction further obscure the feeling of melodic unity. Two measures (eight and nine) contain too many beats. The beginning and ending notes and the chordal and scale patterns strongly establish the tonal center as G, but the chordal patterns built on the sixth and third degrees (as in bars 10, 13, 14, etc.) produce a blurring effect. Dynamic and articulation indications are missing.

Minimal

In this piece the melody is erratic and disconnected, giving no indication of phrase structure. The notes are almost random with very little pattern. There are no repeated melodic or rhythmic motifs to give a unifying effect. The stronger notes often occur on the weak beats of the measure, and some measures contain the wrong number of beats. The key is quite vague, with stronger cadences shifting between C, E, D, and G. The melody hints weakly at a tonal center of C and ends with a scale segment leading to G. Dynamics and articulation are missing completely.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a five-line staff. The notation is in black ink and includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. There are several circled numbers (5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40) written above the staff, likely indicating measure numbers. The notation is somewhat erratic, with some notes appearing on weak beats and some measures containing an unusual number of notes. The key signature is not clearly defined, but the notes suggest a key of C major or a related key. The piece ends with a scale segment leading to G. The overall style is minimalist and experimental.